

## Toxicity of Wheat Non-Specific Lipid Transfer Proteins to *Tilletia tritici*, the Common Bunt Pathogen

D.A. GAUDET, J.-Y. SUN, Z.-X. LU, M. FRICK, B. PUCHALSKI and A. LAROCHE

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Lethbridge Research Centre, P.O. Box 3000,  
5403-1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, South, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1J 4B1 Canada, e-mail: GaudetD@agr.gc.ca

**Abstract:** Non-specific-Lipid Transfer Proteins (ns-LTPs) have the potential to exhibit both lipid transfer activity and antimicrobial activity. Eleven novel full-length wheat ns-LTP1 clones, all possessing coding sequences of 348 bp, isolated from abiotic- and bunt-stressed cDNA libraries, exhibited highly conserved coding regions with 78–99% and 71–100% identity at the nucleotide and amino acid levels, respectively. The deduced proteins coded by these cDNAs were characteristic of the ns-LTP1 family. The full-length wheat ns-LTP1 genes were cloned into the expression vector pPICZ $\alpha$  and transformed into *Pichia* yeast. SDS-PAGE, Western blotting and *in vitro* lipid binding activity assay confirmed that the eight ns-LTPs were all successfully expressed and capable of *in vitro* binding of fatty acids. A large scale comparative study of the toxicity of eight wheat ns-LTPs to growth of mycelium or spores of eight wheat pathogens including *T. tritici*, and three non-wheat pathogens demonstrated a differential toxicity among the ns-LTPs. LD<sub>50</sub> values of three selected ns-LTPs against six fungi ranged from 1 to 7  $\mu$ mol/l. *In vitro* lipid binding activity of ns-LTPs was not correlated with their antifungal activity. Using the fluorescent probe SYTOX Green as an indicator of membrane integrity, the toxicity of wheat ns-LTPs was shown to be associated with an alteration in fungal membrane permeability.

**Keywords:** antifungal activity; ns-LTPs; wheat pathogens; membrane integrity